



*"People
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people
help
themselves"*

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To: Local Office Directors
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All ICWIS users

From: Stephen E. DeMougin, Director
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Date: March 17, 2004

Subject: Trial Home Visits

DFC – 03 - 11

The purpose of this letter is to clarify the Title IV-E Foster Care (FC) eligibility policy as it relates to the use of a "trial home visit" (THV). A THV is defined as a visit that is intended to be of short duration in preparation for the child returning home permanently. A THV takes place when the child visits that person's home that is indicated in the child's permanency plan while the local DFC maintains "placement and care responsibility". At a minimum, the court will be notified, in writing, by the local office of the intent to begin a THV. The initial THV does not require a court order.

The child may remain on a THV up to 180 days without having the removal episode end. When there is a need to extend the THV beyond the original 180 days, prior to the expiration of the THV, a court order must be obtained approving the extension. Each time the court approves an extension of a THV, an order must specify the THV is being extended and the date this extension will expire. The court may extend the THV for any length of time or numerous times. At the end of the 180 day THV or at the end of a court-approved extension and the child has not returned to foster care, the IV-E FC eligibility is closed and the child is considered reunited.

During the child's THV, six month redeterminations, six month periodic review hearings and permanency hearings are to continue on their original schedule. If the child returns to placement before the THV time frame expires, a desk review shall be done for the child no later than 30 days after the child returns to placement. A desk review is a reevaluation of the child's IV-E FC eligibility between the required six-month redetermination. However, if the redetermination is due within 30 days of the date the child returns to placement, the redetermination is to be done instead of the desk review. When the THV ends with the child returning to placement, prior to the expiration of the THV, the removal episode is considered continuous. In this circumstance, the child's redetermination, six-month periodic review and permanency hearing schedule remains the same. There is no need for a new removal order with Best Interest and Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal in this situation, and the original IV-E FC eligibility determination continues.

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During the THV, the child's IV-E FC eligibility status on the FC History screen in ICWIS will usually be "CL-ADMIN". In rare situations, the FC History may be "NO-ADMIN"; this is usually the case when the child is in a "NO-ADMIN" status at the time the THV begins. The child will continue to be eligible for Medicaid coverage under the Title IV-E FC category (MA4) during the THV.

While the child is on a THV with a specified relative, this relative may make application for TANF and/or other public assistance programs. If the household is awarded TANF, the child's FC History status will remain either a "CL-ADMIN" or "NO-ADMIN". The MA 4 Medicaid shall be linked to the TANF Medicaid ensuring that there is no break in Medicaid coverage. Although there is an open TANF case, the IV-E FC case shall remain open until such time as a decision is made on the permanency of the child's placement or the THV expires. If the decision is made that the THV is successful and the child will not be returning to foster care placement or the THV timeframe has expired, IV-E FC eligibility is terminated and reunification has taken place.

On March 27, 2000, the Federal regulations increased the time frame for a child to remain on a THV from 90 days to 180 days. With the regulation change, the ability to extend a THV beyond 180 days with a court-ordered extension while maintaining the original IV-E FC eligibility determination also came. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a THV shall be implemented prior to reunification of a child. The change in Federal regulation is very positive for several reasons.

By placing a child on THV, the local DFC has the opportunity to provide services in the home and continue to closely monitor the child's situation. This provides the family a better transitional period. The child's THV placement may be changed quickly through a change of placement request to the court. Because this would not be considered a new removal, a detention hearing with all necessary paperwork is not required. If the THV ends with the child returning to placement, this is not considered a repeat maltreatment and a reentry into foster care. If the THV fails, the original initial IV-E FC determination remains. There is no need for a new judicial removal with Best Interest and Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal determinations.

The currently published Indiana Child Welfare Manual, subsection 911.121, "Own Home Visitation by the IV-E FC Child", outlines the use of the trial home visit prior to March 27, 2000. Refer to the Federal Child Welfare Manual, section 8.3C.5, for the current policy. This can be found online at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/cwpm/updates.jsp>.

Please ensure that the THV is timely and correctly entered into ICWIS to avoid AFCARS errors and guarantee maximum funding reimbursement of the child's IV-E FC. If you have questions concerning the entry of a THV into ICWIS, please consult the ICWIS Bulletin Board, contact your ICWIS coordinator, or call the ICWIS Help Desk. If you have questions concerning IV-E FC policy and eligibility, please contact the CEU consultant for your county or Sandi Sleppy, CEU